

Whitley County Board of Education
300 Main Street
Williamsburg, KY 40769

Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington, DC 20554

October 23, 2017

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing today in response to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice which, among other things, considers changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program and for the critical programmatic and policy changes the commission adopted in 2014. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

Whitley County Schools services more than 4100 students in grades K through 12. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 29.8% of the population live below the poverty level. Nineteen percent of the district student population is identified as students with disabilities; 14.1% of our students are identified as Gifted and Talented. In 2016 the unemployment rate was 6.2%, with Whitley County's median household income of \$32,255, which is far below the state average of \$43,342. In addition 100.0% of Whitley County students receive free or reduced lunch. These cultural and economic deprivations are learning barriers our school district must work to overcome. We contribute our success to our E-rate dollars.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this public notice, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted in 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

E-Rate played a critical role in the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband. The E-Rate's investment in Category 2 Wi-Fi and internal connections funding is extremely valuable and could not be replaced by school, district or state funds.

Our school district has already used some of our E-Rate Category 2 allotment for wireless connectivity and our switching infrastructure. As a result we are able to implement a high speed one-to-one solution from grades seven through eleven giving our students access to a plethora of online educational resources throughout the school day.

In closing, I reiterate my district's continued, strong support for and reliance upon the E-Rate program for being able to access and afford the high-speed connectivity that is so central to our students' learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Kevin Anderson,CIO